

Historic, Archive Document

Do not assume content reflects current scientific knowledge, policies, or practices.



1.9
6/8/38
NUTRITION WORK IN SOUTH DAKOTA

A radio interview between Miss Susan Z. Wilder, Extension Service Nutritionist at South Dakota State College, and Everett Mitchell, NBC announcer, presented Wednesday, May 4, 1938, in the Department of Agriculture period of the Farm and Home Hour, and broadcast by a network of 90 stations associated with the National Broadcasting Company.

-----oooOooo-----

EVERETT MITCHELL:

And now we're going to hear from a lady from South Dakota -- Miss Susan Z. Wilder, Extension Service Nutritionist at South Dakota State College. Miss Wilder has come here to Chicago to tell us about -- Well, everybody knows what an Extension Service Nutritionist is interested in -- good food. (Aren't we all!) But the nutrition program in South Dakota is different -- so different, and so effective -- that folks all over the country are asking about it. Now Miss Wilder, will you tell us what you're doing, out there in the fair State of South Dakota -- ridden by drought and grasshoppers?

SUSAN WILDER:

You don't believe that!

MITCHELL:

No, Miss Wilder, I don't, to tell the truth. But some people seem to picture South Dakota as a barren land -- swept free of crops, and free of grass.

WILDER:

And a regular inferno of howling dust storms!

MITCHELL:

Well --

WILDER:

I know. I've heard the same stories. And I don't want anybody to picture South Dakota as a land overflowing with the victims of crop failures. It's true -- we do have a "problem area" -- the land lying between the cattle and sheep range country west of the Missouri River Section, the Black Hills and the really good and prosperous farming counties of the East and Southeastern counties.

MITCHELL:

But when we hear -- or read -- tragic stories of the damage done by crop failures, we're not getting the whole story.

WILDER:

Indeed you are not! We're not all "down and out". People in the South Dakota western range years ago adjusted themselves to the idea that it was not a farming country. People in the eastern parts of the State have had average crops all during the so-called drought years. We've had fine rains this spring.

(over)

MITCHELL:

Crop prospects good?

WILDER:

Very good. You should come to South Dakota, and see for yourself.

MITCHELL:

Is it a good place to spend a vacation?

WILDER:

Oh yes -- I know you'd enjoy the great plains, and the Black Hills. Our largest city, Sioux Falls, has gained steadily in population the last 10 years. State College, five years ago, had less than 1,000 students. Now it has right near 2,000. You can see that not all our citizens are up against it.

MITCHELL:

I should say not. Now of course every State in the Union has a nutrition problem of some kind or other -- but tell us how your problems, in South Dakota, are different from others.

WILDER:

I don't think our problems are so much different -- it's what we've done about them. The nutrition committee in our State -- I'm a member of this committee -- has been planning and working so that every child attending country school will have a hot dish at noon, to go with the lunch he brings from home -- in the tin pail. The cold lunch that's been in the tin pail since morning.

MITCHELL:

Doesn't sound very appetizing. You need more than a cold tin-pail lunch, after you've worked hard all morning at reading and writing and 'rithmetic.

WILDER:

You certainly do. And more and more of our rural school children are getting something more. At the close of last year, 14,000 youngsters had had one hot dish at noon. More than 1,200 schools were following our recommendations -- most of them using the "pint jar" method. In some counties -- Sully County, for instance -- more than three-fourths of all the rural schools were serving a hot dish. In another county, 130 rural schools out of 135 had the same service.

MITCHELL:

All but five schools in the county.

WILDER:

Yes. And 13 counties reported that 20 to 100 schools were serving a hot dish at noon.

MITCHELL:

That sounds fine to me. Now you said something about the "pint jar" method. That means, of course, that a youngster brings his lunch to school in a pint jar.

WILDER:

Yes -- the part of the lunch that is to be served hot. And they eat the hot food -- it may be _____ or _____, with sandwiches brought from home. Then there's another method of serving the hot dish. In some schools the hot lunch is prepared -- right at the school -- by women from the Works Progress Administration and girls from the National Youth Administration, with the teacher supervising. I'd like to say right here that we have the finest kind of cooperation from everybody -- the county superintendent, the school board, the teachers, and the children.

MITCHELL:

Everybody works but father.

WILDER:

Did I leave out father? Indeed father does work! Father and mother work right along with the rest of us -- for better school lunches.

MITCHELL:

Fathers ought to be among your best boosters -- if they remember the cold and clammy lunches they used to carry to school. Miss Wilder, when did you start this work?

WILDER:

In 1936. That was the year the Federal Extension Service called a conference of agencies interested in child health and nutrition -- the Minneapolis District Conference.

MITCHELL:

That's when your county nutrition committees were organized?

WILDER:

Yes. And the members of this committee, in each county, are the county health nurse, the county superintendent of schools, all high school teachers of homemaking, the district home management supervisor of the Farm Security Administration, and the Home Demonstration Agent of the State Extension Service

MITCHELL:

Well -- I hope you'll pardon me for being so ignorant about such things -- but just how did you actually go to work on your hot school lunches.

WILDER:

First, all members of the nutrition committee agreed to work on certain projects. The hot school lunch project was one of the most important. With everybody agreed upon that point, a member of the committee went to the county superintendent of schools, and asked permission to put on a hot lunch demonstration at the teachers' institute, held in the fall.

MITCHELL:

Who gave the demonstrations?

WILDER:

The Home Demonstration Agents, and the home management supervisors of the Farm Security Administration. They used plans suggested by the Extension Nutritionist.

MITCHELL:

And how many demonstrations did they give? Two or three dozen?

WILDER:

Just about five dozen. They gave demonstrations in 59 of our 69 counties.

MITCHELL:

That's all but ten counties.

WILDER:

Yes. The county superintendents have been wonderful cooperators. Thirty-three of them made a special report on the hot-lunch project, at the close of the last school year. And the county nurses were a wonderful help, too. As they went about their regular work, they told parents, as well as teachers, how important it is for a child to have a hot dish at noon -- to keep his health up to standard.

MITCHELL:

Have any trouble in interesting the kids in a hot dish every noon?

WILDER:

Do you have any trouble teaching a fish to swim -- or a duck to fly?

MITCHELL:

Not that I ever heard of!

WILDER:

Why, those children take to their hot lunches, like -- like ducks to water. Even the youngsters who used to complain at home, about eating foods containing dried skim milk, eat these foods eagerly, at school. They see other children eating their _____, and _____, and naturally, they want to do the same thing.

MITCHELL:

Who actually does the cooking? Somebody has to work -- to supply a school full of hungry kids with hot vegetable soup, and so on.

WILDER:

Oh yes -- it means work, all right. In many schools, the vocational homemaking instructors helped out by directing the preparation and serving of the meal. One Home Economics teacher trained two girls to give demonstrations -- and these girls taught the hot-school-lunch technique in eight rural schools of the country. The home demonstration agents helped too. They worked right along with nutrition leaders from home extension clubs, and with 4-H Club leaders. The Home Demonstration agents supplied the recipes for the hot meals, and recipes for sandwich fillings.

MITCHELL:

And everything went along smoothly.

WILDER:

Smoothly? Not always, Mr. Mitchell. A program never seems to run just the way you expect it to.

MITCHELL:

Well, I guess that's true enough. Now tell us about the food for these hot lunches. Where did you get it?

WILDER:

In many sections, the Surplus Commodities Corporation of the Agricultural Adjustment Administration supplied foods to the schools, following required regulations. These foods, including (_____)

were shipped to the county seat. A teacher, or one of the parents, took the food out to the school. In one county, Charles Mix County, the commissioners hired trucks to haul the food to distributing points, and they also arranged to have it stored, until it was taken out to the different schools.

MITCHELL:

You seem to have had one hundred percent cooperation all right, in this school lunch work. And the children improved in health? Gained in weight and so on?

WILDER:

Oh yes. School nurses all over the State reported that the children gained weight, as a result of their nourishing lunches, and many teachers said the children had "an increased ability to learn." I'm sure that's true.

MITCHELL:

It's pretty hard to work -- when you're not well fed. Miss Wilder, you said something a while ago that interested me.

WILDER:

What was that?

MITCHELL:

About using dried skim milk. Will you tell us more about that?

WILDER:

I'll be glad to. You know it isn't always an easy matter to persuade people that some of the foods they have to use during the short crop years are wholesome and delicious. The past few years, in some counties of South Dakota, we've had a shortage of milk.

MITCHELL:

Because the drought cut down the number of milk cows.

WILDER:

Yes. And of course all children need milk. To help out with the milk supply, the Surplus Commodities Corporation shipped dried milk to South Dakota. At first, people didn't look at it very favorably. Sometimes they'd throw it away, rather than even give it a trial.

MITCHELL:

But why?

WILDER:

Well, it was hard for some people to get used to milk in powder form.

MITCHELL:

I see. They're used to fluid milk -- not dry-powder, in a can.

WILDER:

Exactly. Well, you know the best way to show people how to use a food they're not accustomed to is to serve that food in a delicious _____, or a _____ pudding. And then invite them to eat the pudding. That's just what the nutrition committee members did with dried skim milk. In Lake and McCook counties, the home demonstration agents gave 40 demonstrations, showing the women how to use dried skim milk in such baked products as _____, and in creamed dishes. And these cooked dishes were so good -- you couldn't tell they hadn't been made with fluid milk. One mother, who had firmly declared she would never use dried skim milk, tasted some delicious cocoa made with powdered milk, and after that she was all for it. Homemakers reported they were glad to learn how to cook with dried skim milk. One woman wrote that she was finding it excellent to use. They had no fresh milk, because of lack of feed for the cows.

MITCHELL:

And you had plenty of recipes, to distribute.

WILDER:

Plenty of good recipes, and now dried skim milk is a popular food in South Dakota. The problem is to get enough to go around. Families not on WPA are buying the powdered milk to supplement their supply of whole milk.

MITCHELL:

I should think creameries -- bakeries -- would sell it.

WILDER:

They do. But generally in large packages. What we need -- what homemakers would like to have -- is small packages they could get at the grocery store. The educational work on the use of dried skim milk has reached beyond the WPA workers, for whom it was originally intended. Now other people want it, and they can't find it on the market. We'd like to buy dried skim milk in small containers, for home use.

MITCHELL:

Sounds like a good idea. Now let's have our codliver oil.

WILDER:

Our what?

MITCHELL:

What were you saying, before we came in, about codliver oil?

WILDER:

Why, I said that the State Board of Health, through the county nurse, gave out information on the value of codliver oil, for children who need it in their diet. In many cases, they distributed the codliver oil, too -- as well as the information.

MITCHELL:

Did -- or does -- your program include such things as canning?

WILDER:

Yes indeed! Canning is a very important part of our work. In South Dakota, the problem of conserving the food supply is a vital one. We had demonstrations on the best methods of canning fruits, meats, and vegetables. We put on a big campaign to urge everybody to plant a garden, as well as take care of the family's food supply. Plans were drawn up for family-size vegetable gardens which would do well in our South Dakota climate. Many good yields were reported, from these small gardens.

MITCHELL:

That's fine. And now I'm sorry to say the time has come when we must say goodbye. Thank you very much, Miss Wilder, for coming to Chicago.

WILDER:

And I thank you, Mr. Mitchell, and the Farm and Home Hour directors, for inviting me to come. Goodbye.

EVERETT MITCHELL:

Goodbye, and come again. Farm and Home folks, you have just heard Miss Susan Z. Wilder, Extension Service Nutritionist at South Dakota State College, reporting on nutrition work in South Dakota.

#####

